GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2661
ANSWERED ON:15.12.2015
Vulture Population
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the use of anti-inflammatory drug Diclofenac has caused steep decline in the population of vultures in the country;
(b) if so, the details thereof;
(c) whether the Ministry has taken up the matter with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare to restrict the use of Diclofenac;
(d) if so, the details thereof and the response received in this regard; and
(e) the other steps taken by the Government to protect the vulture from extinction?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a)&(b) Yes, Sir. It is a fact that the use of anti-inflammatory drug Diclofenac has caused steep decline in the population of vultures in the country. A survey conducted by the Bombay Natural History Society under a special project sponsored in the year 2000 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change revealed that there has been more than 90 percent decline in the populations of three species of vultures viz, White Backed, Long Billed and Slender Billed in many parts of the country. Post mortem and diagnostic tests have revealed that this decline has been due to consumption of the veterinary drug 'Diclofenac' by the vultures that fed on carcasses of livestock. Diclofenac causes deposition of uric acid in the visceral organs leading to sudden death.

(c)&(d) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had been requested for stopping veterinary use of Diclofenac and later for restriction on packaging of Diclofenac (human formulations) to single dose packaging for human use and to discourage veterinary use of Diclofenac and incentivize the use of Meloxicam. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued Gazette Notification dated 4.7.2008 prohibiting manufacture of Diclofenac for animal use and later by Gazette Notification dated 17.7.2015 restricting on packaging of multi-dose vials of Diclofenac to single dose.

(e) The following are the important steps taken by Government for protection of Vultures in the country:

(i) Protection status of White backed, Long Billed and Slender Billed Vultures has been upgraded from Schedule IV to Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
(ii) Two workshops were organized in New Delhi in September 2000 and April, 2004 to work out a comprehensive strategy for conservation of vultures in consultation with scientists.
(iii) Bombay Natural History Society in collaboration with the Haryana State Forest Department has taken up a project on conservation breeding of vultures. A 'Vulture Captive Care facility' has been established at Panchkula.
(iv) The Ministry of Health has issued Gazette Notification dated 4.7.2008 prohibiting manufacture of Diclofenac for animal use and vide notification dated 17.7.2015 restricting packaging of multi-dose vials of Diclofenac to single dose.
(v) The State Governments have been advised to set up vulture care centres for the conservation of three species of vultures.
(vi) Government of India has formulated a National Action Plan (2006) on Vulture Conservation. The Action Plan provides for strategies, actions for containing the decline of vulture population through ex-situ, in-situ vulture conservation.
(vii) Department of forests of all states/UTs has been requested to constitute a Monitoring committee for vulture conservation with a view to implement the Action Plan, 2006 and for recovery of existing vulture sites.
(viii) Captive breeding centres at Zoos at Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Junagarh and Hyderabad have also been set up through Central Zoo Authority.
(ix) Ministry has also taken initiatives to strengthen the mass education and awareness for vulture conservation.

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